



FACT SHEET

Module 15 Sharing the Road with Farm Equipment



Massive equipment, moving from field to field for plowing, planting and harvesting, often take up more than a single lane of rural roadways even if the operator is driving as close to the trees on the far edge of the shoulder as possible.

Courtesy and patience are important as drivers share the road with agricultural implements. Equipment operators will generally pull off to the side of the road to let traffic behind them pass at frequent intervals. However, as many rural areas have recently become home to many new residents, traffic levels on country roadways in agricultural areas have been steadily increasing. When a farmer meets a steady stream of oncoming vehicles, the farmer may feel that it is more prudent to continue on rather than risk partially pulling off to the side of the road and having motorists pass when oncoming traffic may be approaching at high rates of speed. This is especially true when visibility is poor in the case of curves or hills.

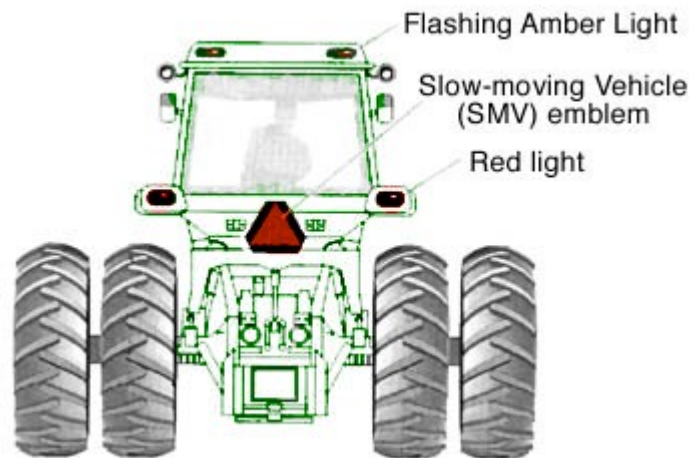
The following good habits can help protect yourself and others while traveling on rural roadways during plowing, planting, and harvest seasons.

Slow down. Excessive speed on rural roadways is dangerous. It is important to keep in mind that farm equipment generally has top speeds of 15-20 mph. Hills, woods, streams, grades, curves and bridges on rural roadways can greatly reduce your ability to know what lies ahead on the road. What lies ahead could also be herds of cattle, deer, etc. Excessive speed both impairs the driver's ability to stop if you are behind agricultural equipment and reduces the time that an equipment operator has to react to you if they meet you around a curve.

Don't assume that the equipment operator knows that you are behind them. Unlike the stable mirrors that are found on cars and pickups today, mirrors on farm equipment tend to take a lot of abuse from tree branches and are prone to vibrating. Visibility behind harvesters and tractors pulling wagons is very limited at best.

Be cautious when passing farm equipment. Look for potential field entrances when you are preparing to pass. If the equipment ahead of you is slowing, especially if there is an opening to a field, there is a good chance that the operator may be getting ready to turn. This is a good time to wait rather than pass, even if the operator is planning on turning right. Often farm equipment will have to make wide turns in order to be able to gain access to the field. Some of the newer equipment may have turn signals, but much of the older equipment will not. Often, tractors pulling large gravity wagons will have turn signals and flashers running, but they will not be visible to motorists directly behind the wagon because of the height of the implement.

Watch for lights and slow moving vehicle (SMV) Triangles at night. If you see a pattern of lights ahead of you that you do not immediately recognize as a car or truck, slow down. Farm equipment may have many different configurations of lights or reflective markings. In addition, most wagons and other implements should have a red and orange reflective triangle (Slow-Moving Vehicle) sticker at the rear. Pass or meet with caution.



This graphic was published in the Bulletin "Boosting Visibility of Ag Equipment" AEX-598-99 authored by Tom Bean - Leader, Safety Department of Food, Agricultural and Biological Engineering at The Ohio State University